



## Human Resources Division

*Addressing Employee Concerns*

### *Employees say, in part*

*“I enjoy the diversity in my current position. There are no two days exactly the same. In addition, I appreciate the ability to make an impact by being on statewide workgroups.”*

*“I enjoy being provided the opportunity to submit and share ideas. There is a real team atmosphere in place.”*

*“I like the people I work with. They have a positive work attitude and a great work ethic. They come to work to work and are respectful of one another.”*

*“I like my co-workers and the ability to resolve issues that left or ignored could create enormous financial liability to the Agency. I enjoy solving problems and seeing work environments and Employees improve.”*

### **CONTACT INFORMATION**

For more information, contact

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***Thank you for your participation and feedback. We are interested and remain committed in continuing our efforts to improve our support for you.*** This year, 93 out of 98 employees (95%) responded to the survey. Such a high response rate not only helps provide an accurate picture of the employee environment and health within HRD, but also reaffirms our one Core Set of Values that guide our actions in the workplace. The survey results were encouraging but most importantly recognized improvements made after the 2009 survey. We scored above the DSHS average in the following areas:

- I know what is expected of me at work
- My supervisor treats me with dignity and respect
- I have the tools and resources I need to do my job effectively
- A spirit of cooperation and teamwork exists in my workgroup
- I receive the information I need to do my job effectively
- My agency consistently demonstrates support for a diverse workforce

You also shared information that was important and identified other areas for continued improvement including some of the following:

- I have opportunities at work to learn and grow
- I am encouraged to come up with better ways of doing things
- I receive recognition for a job well done
- In my workgroup we use customer feedback to improve our work processes
- I receive clear information about changes being made within the agency

The Operations and Position Management sections have developed action plans to address four focus areas that have the best potential for realistic improvement. This action plan is an evolving draft of an overall plan summarizing common issues shared by both sections. The HRD Leadership Team have read the results and comments and identified four of the most important issues to focus on – as many of you stated, your workloads continue to be high and too many changes at once can be overwhelming. Although we believe we have made progress, we are committed to improving upon what has previously been accomplished in order to create a Talent Management culture where staff feel valued for their talent and contributions and empowered to define and achieve their career goals with support from their supervisors and managers. We want to instill in everyone to do their work and relate with each other in a way that encourages productivity, engagement, enjoyment and appreciation of our differences.

I invite each of you to join me, your supervisor, and your peers to be creative, flexible and to actively participate in identifying solutions to put this plan into action in the coming months. I value your opinions and look forward to continuing our efforts to strengthen HRD and enhance the work environment. I acknowledge and appreciate your diligence and hard work, and for your continued efforts in making HRD a great place to work. Thank you!

***Glen Christopherson, Senior Director, Human Resources Division***



## Focus Issue: Opportunities to learn and grow

### Employees say, in part...

*"We are constantly changing and growing to learn new procedures, take on new challenges, and work with new employers and managers every."*

*"More one-on-one with my supervisor to help align my goals with the agency's"*

*"Use Talent Management Structure to look for new talent within HR"*

*"At this time I am hoping that I have an opportunity to learn and grow. It appears the same employees receive the opportunity for advancement, educational training, DJA's, and other special treatment for them to advance"*

*"More cross training into specialized areas. Having extra information to either advance into future positions or speak more effectively about that area would be appreciated"*

### Summary of the Issue

In response to the question, **"I have opportunities at work to learn and grown"** HRD scored 1% higher than the DSHS average, however the 2011 survey reflected an 8% decrease from 2009 (58% to 49%). Employee development is a shared, ongoing responsibility. Employees want and need the chance to learn and grow through opportunities to promote, transfer and voluntarily demote into other positions. When these opportunities are not available, cross-training, job-shadowing, developmental job assignments and other creative ways that will allow an employee to increase and enhance their skills and abilities is essential to incorporating the principles of Talent Management for each employee. While it is important that we have subject matter experts in human resources, it is equally important that we expand that expertise among our workforce, building depth and capacity to better serve our customers.

### What we're already doing

- Advertising transfer and voluntary demotion opportunities within HRD; Cross-training opportunities.
- Holding HRD All Staff meetings, HR Representative meetings, HR Combined meetings, HR Management Team meetings and conference calls to share and receive information from internal and external presenters.
- Building into the agendas for HR Representatives and Unit Meetings, developmental topics, such as, just cause examples, disciplinary letter reviews, reasonable accommodation, Administrative Policy reviews, investigation reviews, etc.
- Participating in workgroups, special projects/assignments.
- Training (internal/external), including having HR Representatives and HRC1s in Institutions observe HR trainings and meetings such as MCSSs, Demand to Bargain, reasonable accommodations, grievances, etc., for developmental growth.

### Our plan for the coming year

- Supervisors will regularly engage staff in dialogue regarding growth and development interests.
- When financially feasible approve travel in order to hold in-person meetings, either HRD ALL Staff; within each regions, or HR Combined meeting
- Operations and Position Management will develop partnerships to expand developmental job opportunities across office lines.
- Advertise and increase cross-training and DJA opportunities that can also be done remotely by field staff as well as by staff in headquarters.
- Create opportunities for staff to observe Direct Reports, HRAC, grievance hearing, UMCCs, pre-disciplinary meetings, Demand to Bargains, and other meetings they would not typically have an opportunity to attend.
- Bring in high-quality outside presenters to HR All Staff meetings
- Provide time and resources for internal training, including back-up when HR staff is preparing for and presenting training.



## Focus Issue: Recognition for a job well done

### Employees say, in part...

*“More recognition and appreciation for the good work I and my co-workers accomplish; for example, statements of appreciation from first or second line supervisors in Part 3 of the PDP”*

*“More communication from upper management to first line supervisors and above about valuing our workforce”*

*“Give meaningful feedback and appreciation for all that is done, not just reprimanded for every little thing that is missed”*

*“The fact that my position is appreciated by all staff members who inform me of this regularly”*

### Summary of the Issue

In response to the question, **“I receive recognition for a job well done”**, we achieved 47% in the 2011 survey which is down from 59% in 2009. Recognition is an important part of an employee’s work-life and managers and supervisors must strive to recognize when it is time to acknowledge and thank employees for a job well done. With the temporary layoff days and salary reduction, and ever-increasing demands on their time, recognition is a way to demonstrate to employees what they do is noticed and appreciated. With overall job satisfaction reflecting a concerning decrease of 12% over the 2009 survey, it’s clear that more work needs to be done in recognizing, valuing and celebrating the efforts and successes of our staff.

In an environment with ever-changing priorities, reduced budgets and looming deadlines, focus easily shifts from recognizing employees for their accomplishments to concentrating on the task at hand. While formal recognition of staff achievements is very important, we must continue to focus our efforts not only for extraordinary achievements, but most importantly on more frequent informal recognition opportunities to simply say **“Thank You”** for a job well done.

### What we’re already doing

- Informal recognition via email or personal thank you for outstanding effort.
- Annual formal employee recognition events.
- Sharing customer notes/emails of appreciation/thanks up our chain
- Sharing individual/unit recognition with management – creating awareness of the achievements of our staff.
- Recognition during HR All staff, HR Representative and HR Combined meetings.
- HRD Appreciation Station (OB2)

### Our plan

- Continue what we are currently doing but with added emphasis, particularly by supervisors, on genuinely recognizing notable performance and achievements
- Create an area on the HRD website where staff appreciations can be posted
- HRAs create Appreciation Stations in the regions
- Recognize anniversary dates on a monthly basis on the HRD website
- Develop an On-the-Spot on-line award certificate for use in recognizing staff achievements
- Ask customers to put verbal thank you/appreciations in writing so they can be shared and acknowledged up the chain
- Encourage staff to recognize and thank each other
- Staff may choose to recognize each other’s birthdays, possibly a regional birthday recognition event
- Use handwritten thank you notes to recognize staff



## Focus Issue: Communication

### Employees say: in part...

*“More transparency between management and employees”*

*“Continued increase in communication throughout our division on changes within the organization and our workgroups”*

*“Tell us what’s going on whether it’s good or bad, we would like to know”*

*“Timely communication from HQ to HR offices, sometimes we receive information from our customers first”*

*“Sometimes it feels like the folks who work in headquarters don’t really know what impact their decisions have on the field staff”*

*“Continued increase in communication throughout our division on changes and our workgroups”*

*“I think communication should be meaningful and explain or support the actions being taken”*

### Summary of the Issue

This focus area poses the question **“I receive clear information about changes being made within the agency”**. In the past two years, HRD has made great efforts to increase upward communication, and to solicit input from employees on proposed changes. In the human resource function, communication is critical to success. In an organization as large as DSHS, ensuring the right message has gone out to the right audience is important not only for information sharing purposes, but also so that staff understand how the work assignments they are given fit into the department’s overall mission, goals, and direction. Employees need to know what is happening in order to feel a sense of connection and receiving clear and accurate information in a timely manner reinforces their sense of connectivity.

In this focus area, we achieved 46%, a significant decrease from 78% in the 2009 survey. However, in the 2009 survey, the wording of the question changed from **“I have received clear information about recent budget reductions and changes being made within the agency.”** One concern expressed is that staff sometimes learn about changes and assignments that impact them from our customers – the timing of messages is important so that when they are broadly distributed to our customers, staff are aware of and understand the communication in order to quickly respond to subsequent questions. This clearly demonstrates a need for continued improvement.

### What we’re already doing

- HRD All Staff meetings, HR Representative meetings, HR Combined staff meetings, HR Unit meetings, Operations and Position Management Team meetings and conference calls.
- Emails from the Senior Director, Office Chiefs, and Executive Leadership Team
- Regularly scheduled Director’s Chats to share information.
- Regularly scheduled Direct Reports meetings

### Our plan

- Shorter meetings with more “meaty stuff”
- Encourage staff to identify topics they would like the Senior Director to address in Director’s Chats.
- Renewed emphasis on sharing information in a timely, transparent manner that is clear and concise.
- When possible, prior notice to HR staff before sending information to customers.
- Request input from end-users when making changes that impact them.
- Create a site on the HRD webpage to ask questions of the Senior Director.
- When Senior Director meets with customers, provide feedback from meeting with assigned HR staff in the region



## Focus Issue: Use Customer Feedback to Improve Work

### Employees say, in part

*"Continued increase in communication throughout our division on changes within the organization and our workgroups"*

*"When the suggestions I've made are taken into consideration and incorporated, making the situation better and more effective for all"*

*"I would like to see...that management asks workers in their units what can be done to improve efficiencies in their areas..."*

### Summary of the Issue

We are a customer-driven organization and customer feedback is certainly one way to assess how work processes impact our customer's ability to complete actions timely and efficiently. In response to the question, **"In my workgroup we use customer feedback to improve our work processes"** we achieved 44% in the 2011 survey which is a significant decrease from 66% in 2009. Within the Position Management and Operations units, customers are not only the managers and employees in the DSHS Administrations, but also peers within the units, with both groups relying upon each other for a variety of services. Clear and efficient work processes allow supervisors and managers to confidently and effectively manage their human resources.

Welcoming, and where appropriate implementing changes in response to customer feedback, demonstrates true value for customers and a commitment to providing high quality services to staff and our customers. Its important that we remain focused on ensuring our work processes best meet our customers' needs, and not just what we think is the "right" way. We must maintain a focus on doing our work in the best or most efficient way.

### What we're already doing

- Attending Management Team Meetings to receive and share information
- Addressing customer concerns as they are identified
- Regularly communicating with our customers through venues such as the HR Advisory Committee and Classification and Pay Committee.
- Seeking feedback in line with performance evaluations
- Particularly in institutions, we seem to receive and utilize customer feedback more frequently

### Our plan

- Continue what we are already doing with greater emphasis, including utilization of LEAN principles
- Developing business plans to focus on four key areas. Process improvements will include customer feedback and input.
- Inviting customer participation on workgroups related to work processes
- Encourage staff to share ideas for process improvements and efficiencies.
- Conduct Talent Management Training
- Conduct customer surveys
- Seek customer feedback more frequently and be receptive and responsive to the feedback



## Other important issues

While it isn't possible to address every individual issue brought forward as a result of the survey, we are mindful of the concerns raised. The four focus areas identified are a high priority for change and improvement as we move forward, and wherever possible, will identify other important improvements in other areas. The HRD Leadership Team is committed to making improvements and we intend to focus on and develop appropriate steps to address them. Other areas identified as important to you and in need of improvement include:

### These are also important to you

- I am encouraged to come up with better ways of doing thing
- My supervisor gives me ongoing feedback that helps me improve my performance
- I have the opportunity to give input on decisions affecting my work
- My performance evaluation provides me with meaningful information about performance

### Our plan to address these concerns

While identifying areas where improvements can occur, some staff commented that they liked the freedom to work independently, the professionalism and can-do attitudes of people in their workgroup; team work; assisting internal and external customers, working for an awesome boss who demonstrates integrity and an excellent work ethic; working in safe environment to express thoughts, ideas and disagreements; ongoing communication, etc.

- Remind managers and staff why these are important
- Encourage staff/managers/supervisors to work on and discuss these at the workgroup level
- Incorporate into supervisor/management training
- Consider eliminating non-critical HR functions
- Encourage mentoring, coaching, developmental and or rotational job assignments
- Encourage career development opportunities

We are glad to hear what issues concern our employees. The HRD Leadership Team remains committed to following through on the plans for the future in order to make visible changes and improvements that will demonstrate our willingness to try and make our employee's work-life, a more positive and enjoyable experience. This action plan is the continuation of a high-level roadmap to address all the important issues in the work-life of our employees, and if we commit to focusing on the four we identified and make it a priority to follow-through, over the next two years, there should be significant improvement in all areas.

Improving our organization is a continuous effort, and one that involves each of us. If you observe opportunities for improvement, please bring them to the attention of your manager, Office Chief, or the Senior Director. Don't wait until the next employee survey to express and or share your comments and suggestions. **Thank you again for your outstanding participation, your honesty and thoughtful feedback!**